

FISH and WILDLIFE COMMISSION AGENDA ITEM COVER SHEET

Meeting Date: April 19, 2018

Agenda Item: Mandatory Kill and Reporting for Kootenai River Brown Trout Below Libby Dam (R1)

Division: Fisheries

Action Needed: Final

Time Needed on Agenda for this Presentation: 5 Minutes

Background

The first documented Brown Trout in the Kootenai River upstream of Kootenai Falls was caught by an angler and confirmed by the Fish, Wildlife, and Parks (FWP) staff on 3/1/2018. The Kootenai River below Libby Dam contains a naturally reproducing population of Rainbow Trout, and endangered Bull Trout frequent the area because Kokanee Salmon are entrained through Libby Dam and provide abundant forage. Risks from an expanding Brown Trout population include growth to trophy sizes due to abundant forage, by-catch of Bull Trout from angler species misidentification, and predation of naturally reproduced Rainbow and Bull Trout. The proposed regulation in addition to active removal during FWP fisheries survey work are expected to remove Brown Trout before they become established. Rules associated with the unauthorized placement of fish provides guidance on FWP response to discoveries of unauthorized introductions, and instituting mandatory catch and kill regulations is one of the identified management actions (ARM 12.7.1503). The proposed regulations for Brown Trout in the Kootenai River below Libby Dam are to require kill and report all Brown Trout caught in the Kootenai River below Libby Dam to the Kootenai Falls.

Public Involvement Process & Results

This proposal is in response to ARM 12.7.15 Unauthorized Placement of Fish and action plan (ARM 12.7.1501 - 1505). No public process for this proposed regulation change occurred prior to the Commission meeting.

Alternatives and Analysis

No Action alternative: No regulation change would be made. Current regulations that make it illegal to remove a Brown Trout less than 28 inches from the Kootenai between Libby Dam and Fisher River would remain in place. Brown Trout may establish and increase.

Proposed alternative: All Brown Trout caught between Libby Dam and Kootenai Falls would be required killed and reported, allowing FWP to better determine population status. Risk of inadvertent harvest of Bull Trout due to misidentification would increase.

Agency Recommendation & Rationale

The proposed regulation is an appropriate action as required by Unauthorized Placement of Fish (ARM 12.7.1501-1505). It allows anglers to be a part of a solution and management of unauthorized placement of fish.

Proposed Motion: I move the Fish and Wildlife Commission approve a mandatory kill, report, and turn in fishing regulation for Brown Trout as recommended by FWP for the Kootenai River from Libby Dam to Kootenai Falls.